

the same thing. While it is true this will give us more information than we have at present, I have looked into the questions and I am satisfied that the information may be out of date one year from now. Industry has been speeded up to such an extent, and competition **all over the world** is at such a pitch, that the information we get next year probably will not agree with the information which is obtained this year. So I believe the government, in conformity with the decision of this house, should call a provincial conference immediately with a view to establishing an unemployment insurance scheme at the very earliest date, to take care of the workers of this country.

Mr. J. S. WOODSWORTH (Winnipeg North Centre): Mr. Speaker, I thought the former Prime Minister was a past master at showing why things could not be done, but I am afraid he must yield the palm to the present Prime Minister (Mr. Bennett) who has undoubtedly shown how impossible it is for the government to do anything at all with regard to the pressing emergency with which we find ourselves faced. The Prime Minister says he has no delusions whatever as to what unemployment insurance involves. Obviously he is thinking of the heavy financial burden entailed, but I would suggest that the Prime Minister has a great many delusions as to what refusal to enact legislation along this line may involve, not only politically but also as it may affect the welfare of large masses of people throughout this country.

I must express our gratitude to the Prime Minister for making certain suggestions, but from our standpoint those suggestions involve the emasculation of the resolution to a point where it would be almost meaningless. Already the Prime Minister and his party are committed to the principle of unemployment insurance; already the opposition is committed to the principle of unemployment insurance; already Canada herself officially, as a signatory of the League of Nations, is committed to the principle of unemployment insurance, but a long time has passed since the Versailles treaty was signed and practically nothing has been done to advance this measure. We are anxious to get something started. We are not proposing, nor do I think the Prime Minister can imagine that we propose, that a scheme should be started to-morrow. The point we had in view in putting in the word "immediate" was that something should be done in the near future, that the promises of the government should be carried out and not

indefinitely postponed. I fancy we can take it from the statement of the Prime Minister that no legislative enactment will be brought down until prior to the next election.

Mr. LAVERGNE: Would my hon. friend allow me a question, because I am very much interested? Is it not a fact that under section 92 of the British North America Act subparagraph 13, this is a purely provincial matter, because insurance is a civil contract?

Mr. WOODSWORTH: I will come to that point in a moment, and I am glad my hon. friend brought it up. However, on this point with which I am dealing, I say we can only take it that this means an indefinite postponement and that this measure possibly may become a political football at the time of the next election. We are not in any way guaranteed that anything will take place in the near future.

The Prime Minister suggests that we add the word "contributory." We did not add that word simply because we did not want to narrow the scope of our resolution. We did not want to be thought to be dictating in any way the exact form any social insurance scheme should take. Several years ago there was a report presented by a committee of this house dealing with this question, and that report stated very definitely that a measure of this kind should be Dominion-wide in character. The committee suggested that any scheme should be contributory in character and also admitted that according to the legal evidence brought forward, this was not within the competence of the Dominion government. I think perhaps that answers the question raised by the hon. member for Montmagny. While the Prime Minister suggested that there should be a satisfactory arrangement with the provinces, I submit there is not necessarily any reason why a Dominion-wide insurance scheme could not be worked out. If it were non-contributory it could be carried forward. I think the hon. member who has just asked me a question will appreciate that fact, because then it would not be a contract. The scheme, would be on the same basis as the existing old age pensions which are not contributory.

That could be done. I do not want to discuss this question at the moment, but I would point out that we have had legal advice from the very highest authorities on this point, and we are told that the clauses in our constitution which delimit the powers of the Dominion government may be readily construed as admitting the contention that